

Notes of Meeting: South East Advisory Board

Thursday 23 February 2023

Attendance

Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

AB members who sent their apologies for the meeting have, where possible, been consulted on all projects before the meeting. Their views are reflected in the discussion at the meeting (where appropriate). This excludes items where that member declared a conflict of interest.

Regional Director (RD) chair

- Dame Kate Dethridge

Advisory Board (AB) members

- Dame Yasmin Bevan
- Sarah Bennett
- Sarah Brown
- Sir Andrew Carter
- Paul James
- Claire Lowe
- Sue Samson MBE
- Stuart Gardner

DfE senior civil servants

- Paul Schofield – Deputy Director, South East Regions Group

Representations received

- No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting.

General Discussion Points

- It was agreed there were conflicts for Dame Kate Dethridge for the item: Churchend Primary Academy Trust (SAT), **Reading**, to join Orchard Learning Alliance. Dame Kate did not take part in the discussion or make a decision on this item; AB members

gave their comments for the meeting note and a decision will be taken by another Regional Director.

Coastal

Trust Change

Project: To discuss and consider alternative trust options for The Ashwood Academy, The Austen Academy and The Coppice Spring Academy, **Hampshire**, currently in Catch22 MAT.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the trusts presented as options and their capacity to take on the schools.
- AB members considered the different options of the schools joining either the same trust or separate trusts.
- AB members discussed the school improvement track records of the trust options.
- AB members discussed the finances of the trust options.
- AB members were in agreement for the schools to join one trust, rather than separate them.

RD decision: Approve - all 3 schools to Chiltern Way Academy Trust (CWAT).

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the schools and trusts of the RD decision and ask for a more detailed school improvement plan from CWAT.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Ifield Community College, **West Sussex**, to join The Collegiate Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the finances and the governance structure of The Collegiate Trust.
- AB members discussed the trust's growth.
- AB members discussed the trust's school improvement plans and performance of the schools within the trust.
- AB members highlighted a possible conflict of interest in the governance at the trust and would like further information on how the trust addresses this.

RD decision: Defer.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Clarity needed regarding conflict of interest policy within the trust and trust to provide further information on the impact of their school improvement offer. Further clarity also requested on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) risk.

Medway, Kent and Surrey

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Hurst Park Primary, **Surrey**, to join LEO Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the capacity of LEO Academy Trust.
- AB members were in agreement for the school to join the trust.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school and trust of the RD decision.

West

Converter Academy Orders

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Willow Bank Infant School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Willow Bank Junior School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Highwood Primary School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Hillside Primary School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Lambs Lane Primary School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

Project: To discuss and consider the application from South Lake Primary School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Hawkedon Primary School, Wokingham, to convert and join Orchard Learning Alliance.

AB discussion:

- AB members noted the risks of all 7 schools joining Orchard Learning Alliance (OLA) in one go and thought a phased conversion would help to mitigate these risks.
- AB members discussed the need for strong leadership in the trust and the potential need for resource and support for the leadership.
- AB members discussed the finances and governance structure of OLA.
- AB members wanted clarity of the role of the Education Partners in relation to OLA.
- AB members discussed the capacity of Wokingham Borough Council to convert the schools.
- AB members queried what the current interface was between the Schools Learning Alliance and OLA.
- RD would like assurances from the trust about their trust school improvement strategy.
- RD considered what financial support was available in order to support the transfer of the schools.

RD decision: Approve with conditions.

1. Clarity needed on the role of the Education Partners in relation to Orchard Learning Alliance.
2. Orchard Learning Alliance to provide a school improvement strategy for the schools joining and a plan of phased growth.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the schools and trust of the RD decision.

Trust Change

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Churchend Primary Academy Trust (SAT), **Reading**, to join Orchard Learning Alliance.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the options taken by Churchend Primary Academy Trust before their application to join Orchard Learning Alliance.
- AB members discussed the financial information provided by Churchend Primary Academy Trust and wanted some clarity on the accounts.
- AB members discussed the risk of capacity for the Orchard Learning Alliance to take on this school along with the Wokingham schools.
- AB members considered agreeing to the transfer if the phased transfer of the Wokingham schools gave assurances the trust could manage.
- AB members considered the distance of 8 miles between Churchend Primary AT and the nearest Wokingham school.
- AB members discussed the possibility that Churchend Primary Academy Trust could start working with the OLA in the meantime as an associate member.
AB members would like OLA to provide a phased plan of the Wokingham schools and then Churchend Primary AT to come together.

RD decision: None.

Conflicts: Dame Kate Dethridge.

Further actions required: Project to be presented to another Regional Director for decision.

Converter Academy Order

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Chenies School, **Buckinghamshire**, to convert and join Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST).

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed capacity and governance of ODBST.
- AB members discussed the leadership support being provided from the trust to The Downley School.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school of the RD decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss and consider the application from Shrivenham Church of England School, **Oxfordshire**, to lower the age range by adding nursery provision, expand from 1FE to 1.5FE and relocate the school, to be effective from September 2024.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed the relocation and further expansion of the school.
- AB members discussed the financial planning in place to assist with the curriculum and potential to expand to 2FE.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school of the RD decision.

Significant Change

Project: To discuss and consider the application to lower the age range at St John's Catholic Primary School, **Oxfordshire**, from 4-11 to 3-11 years old, to commence from April 2023.

AB discussion:

- AB members discussed whether there was adequate early years support for the provision at the school.
- AB members discussed the finances of Pope Francis Multi Academy Company.

RD decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Inform the school of the RD decision.

Academy Opening Approved in Principle

List of academies approved to open on 1 March 2023.

- The Haven Voluntary Aided CofE/Methodist Primary School, **East Sussex**, to join Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust.
- Valley End CofE Infant School, **Surrey**, to join The Good Shepherd Trust.